



Behind the Wheel... And Driving the Agenda for Highway and Auto Safety.

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## CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY

**Advocates' Booster Seat Law Chart**



### Fact Sheets:

Injury Risk To Children

Setting Priorities For Child Safety

Recent Findings from Partners for Child Passenger Safety

**Advocates' Model Child Passenger Safety Law**

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death and injury for American children. Each year, almost 500 children ages 4 through 7 die and thousands more are injured in motor vehicle crashes. According to the Partners for Child Passenger Safety, booster seats can substantially reduce the risk of death and injury to children through age 7, yet only 19% of children in this age group are using them. Alarming, most of the children in that age group are being put at increased risk of injury or death due to inappropriate restraint in adult seat belts or lack of restraint at all.

Booster seats are intended to provide a platform that lifts the child up off the vehicle seat in order to improve the fit of the child in the adult safety belt. They should also position the lap belt portion of the adult safety belt across the child's hips or pelvic area. An improper fit of an adult safety belt can cause the lap belt to ride up over the stomach and the shoulder belt to cut across the neck, potentially exposing the child to serious abdominal or neck injury. Additionally, if the shoulder strap portion of the lap/shoulder belt is uncomfortable, children will likely place it behind their backs, defeating the safety benefits of the system. When children are properly restrained in a child safety seat, booster seat or safety belt, as appropriate for their age and size, their chance of being killed or seriously injured in a car crash is greatly reduced.

### PROPER CHILD SAFETY SEAT USE

All children should be seated in the back seat.

	<b>INFANTS:</b> Birth to 1 year/ at least 20-22 lbs.	<b>TODDLER:</b> Older than 1 year/ 20-40 lbs.	<b>YOUNG CHILDREN :</b> 4-8 years old/ over 40 lbs., unless 4'9"
<b>TYPE OF SEAT</b>	Infant only or rear-facing convertible	Convertible/ forward-facing	Belt positioning booster seat
<b>SEAT POSITION</b>	Rear-facing only	Forward-facing	Forward-facing
<b>PROPER</b>	Harness straps at or below shoulder level. Never place infants in the	Harness straps at or	Must be used with both lap & shoulder belt. Make sure lap belt fits low & tight across

<b>USE</b>	front passenger seat of cars with air bags.	above shoulders.	lap/upper thigh area & shoulder belt fits snug crossing the chest and shoulder.
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(National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2003)

### **BOOSTER SEAT SAFETY FACTS**

According to Partners for Child Passenger Safety (PCPS), which is conducting the first comprehensive study devoted exclusively to pediatric motor vehicle injury, inappropriate restraint in adult safety belts results in a 3.5-fold increased risk of significant injury and a more than fourfold increased risk of significant head/brain injury. (PCPS (The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, State Farm Insurance Companies), 2003)

Using a booster seat with a seat belt instead of a seat belt alone reduces a child's risk of injury in a crash by 59%. (PCPS, 2003)

In 2004, there were 350 fatally injured child passengers ages 4 through 7. (Fatality Analysis Reporting System, FARS, 2003)

Adult safety belt use is the best predictor of child occupant restraint use. A driver who is buckled up is three times more likely to restrain a child passenger than one who is not buckled. (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1998)

An estimated 17% of children who should be riding in a booster seat are riding completely unrestrained. (NHTSA, 2003)

The best way to protect children age 12 and under from risks posed by air bags is to place them in the back seat, properly restrained by the appropriate child safety seat, booster seat or safety belt.

### **BOOSTER SEAT LAW FACTS**

Twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia have booster seat laws. Only 10 states and DC require booster seats for children ages 4 - 8, as recommended by Advocates.

Child restraint laws have been proven to increase use rates. According to NHTSA's 2002 data, restraint use for children from birth to age 1 was 99%, and from ages 1 to 4 was 94%. However, both SafeKids and PCPS estimate that only 19% of 4-7 year-olds are riding properly restrained in booster seats. (SafeKids, 2002, Partners for Child Passenger Safety Interim Report 2002, updated 2003)

A 2004 Harris poll found that 84% of Americans support all states having booster seat laws protecting children ages 4 to 8. (Lou Harris, for Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, 2004)

A strong child restraint law should require all child occupants to be properly restrained. The law should explicitly require a child to be in an age and size appropriate restraint system. (NHTSA, 2001)

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